Amendments to the Claims:

Claims 1, 2 (cancelled)

3. (currently amended) A rail road car bridge plate operable to permit ~~vehicles~~ a vehicle to be conducted ~~thereover~~ between respective vehicle decks of a pair of first and second longitudinally coupled rail road cars, said bridge plate comprising:

a beam locatable in a longitudinal orientation relative to the rail road cars to span a gap therebetween;

said beam having a surface upon which ~~vehicles~~ the vehicle can be conducted;

said beam having a fitting by which to mount said beam to the first of the rail road cars;

said fitting being operable to accommodate yawing of said beam relative to the first rail road car when said beam is located in the longitudinal orientation and the rail road cars are in motion; and

said fitting permitting movement of said beam from said longitudinal orientation to a cross-wise orientation relative to the first rail road car when said beam is disengaged from the second rail road car.

4. (currently amended) The bridge plate of claim 3 wherein said fitting is chosen from the set of fittings consisting of

(a) a collar for receiving a pivot pin; ~~or~~ and

(b) a pivot pin engageable in a collar;

by which said fitting permits motion of said bridge plate between an extended position spanning a gap between the rail road cars and a storage position.

5. (currently amended) The bridge plate of claim 3 wherein said fitting is a pivot fitting and, when said beam is lying horizontally, said pivot has a predominantly vertical ~~position~~ axis.

6. (currently amended) The bridge plate of claim 3 wherein said beam has a flange defining said surface, and said fitting is a pivot fitting having a pivot axis perpendicular to said ~~upper~~ flange.

7. (original) The bridge plate of claim 3 wherein said fitting is a pivot fitting having a pivot axis perpendicular to said surface.

8. (original) The bridge plate of claim 7 wherein said surface has traction bars mounted thereto.

9. (original) The bridge plate of claim 3 further comprising a second fitting, said second fitting being operable to engage a mating fitting of the second rail road car.

10. (original) The bridge plate of claim 3 further comprising a second fitting operable to engage the second rail road car, said first fitting being a pivot fitting and said second fitting being a slide fitting.

11. (original) The bridge plate of claim 3 wherein said second end has the form of a bifurcated toe.

12. (original) The bridge plate of claim 3 wherein said beam has at least one hand grab mounted thereto to facilitate manipulation of said bridge plate.

13. (currently amended) A bridge plate for spanning a length-wise gap between corresponding vehicle decks of a pair of first and second releasably coupled rail road cars, said bridge plate comprising:

a beam member for supporting the weight of a wheeled ~~vehicles~~ vehicle, said beam member having an upwardly facing surface upon which the vehicle ~~vehicles~~ can be conducted between the rail road cars, said beam having first and second ends;

a first fitting for engaging ~~said~~ the first rail road car;

a second fitting for engaging ~~said~~ the second rail road car;

said first fitting being mountable ~~mounted~~ to connect [[a]] said first end of said beam to the first rail road car, said first fitting permitting pivotal motion of said bridge plate relative to the first rail road car about a first axis normal to said surface ~~relative to the first rail road car~~;

said second fitting being mountable ~~mounted~~ to connect [[a]] said second end of said beam to the second rail road car, said second fitting permitting pivotal motion of said bridge plate relative to the second rail road car about a second axis normal to said surface ~~relative to the second rail road car~~;

said second fitting being operable to accommodate variation of distance between the first and second axes while said rail road cars are coupled together and in motion and

one of said first and second fittings being disengageable.

14. (currently amended) The bridge plate of claim 13 wherein, when the rail road cars are uncoupled, said second end of said bridge plate is disengageable from ~~said~~ the second rail road car, and, when so disengaged, is movable about said first axis to a cross-wise storage position.

15. (original) The bridge plate of claim 13 wherein said second fitting includes a slide capable of linear motion relative to the second axis.

16. (original) The bridge plate of claim 13 wherein said second end of said beam is bifurcated to form a pair of toes, and said second fitting is a slot defined between said toes.

17. (original) The bridge plate of claim 13 wherein said beam includes a top flange, a bottom flange, and webs extending therebetween.

18. (original) The bridge plate of claim 13 wherein said second end of said beam has a handgrab to facilitate manipulation of said beam.

19. (original) The bridge plate of claim 13 wherein said beam has a bottom flange, and a plastic pad mounted to said bottom flange.

20. (currently amended) A bridge plate for spanning a gap between corresponding vehicle decks of a pair of first and second releasably coupled rail road cars, said bridge plate having:

a first pivot fitting mountable to the first rail road car, said pivot fitting permitting pivotal motion of said bridge plate relative to the first rail road car about a first vertical axis;

a second fitting for engaging the second rail road car, said second fitting including a linear extension member permitting pivotal motion of said bridge plate relative to a second vertical axis fixed relative to the second rail road car;

said first fitting being tolerant of yaw motion of the bridge plate relative to the first rail road car when said first fitting is mounted thereto;

said second fitting being disengageable relative to the second rail road car;

said second fitting being tolerant of yaw motion of the bridge plate relative to the second rail road car when said second fitting is engaged thereto; and

said linear extension member tolerating variation in distance between the first and second axes.

21. (original) The bridge plate of claim 20 wherein said bridge plate is a beam having an upper flange, a lower flange, and vertical webs extending therebetween.

22. (original) The bridge plate of claim 21 wherein a nylon (t.m.) pad is mounted to said bottom flange.

23. (original) The bridge plate of claim 20 wherein said linear extension member is a slot defined in said beam.

24. (currently amended) A bridge plate kit for spanning a gap between respective vehicle decks of a pair of first and second releasably coupled rail road cars, said kit comprising:

a bridge plate;

a first pivot pin having a first pivot axis, said first pivot pin being mountable to the first rail road car with said first pivot axis in a vertical orientation;

a second pivot pin having a second pivot axis, said second pivot pin being mountable to the second rail road car with said second pivot axis in a vertical orientation;

and

[[a]] said bridge plate having

a track surface upon which a vehicle can be conducted between the railroad cars when said bridge plate is mounted to span the gap;

a first fitting in engagement with said first pivot pin, said bridge plate being pivotable relative to said first pivot axis;

a second fitting in engagement with said second pivot pin, said bridge plate being pivotable relative to said second axis [[, and]];

said bridge plate being translatable relative to said second axis; and

one of said pivot pins being disengageable.

25. (original) The bridge plate kit of claim 24 wherein said first fitting is a collar matable with said first pivot pin, and said second fitting is a guide matable with said second pivot pin.

26. (original) The bridge plate kit of claim 24 wherein said bridge plate includes a beam member for supporting loads to be conducted between the first and second rail road cars, said first fitting is a collar mounted to said first pivot pin, and said second fitting is an elongated slot, said second pivot pin being seated in said slot.

27. (original) The bridge plate of kit claim 24 wherein said bridge plate includes a beam member for supporting loads to be conducted between said first and second rail road cars, said beam has a pair of toes at one end thereof, and said second fitting is an open ended slot defined between said toes.

28. (original) The bridge plate kit of claim 24 wherein said second pivot pin is removable from the second mounting, and said bridge plate has hand grabs to facilitate pivoting of said bridge plate by hand about said first pivot pin.

29. (currently amended) The bridge plate kit of claim 24 wherein said kit includes two of said bridge plates, two of said first fittings and ~~tow~~ two of said second fittings whereby said bridge plates, when installed, co-operate as a pair of side-by-side wheel trackways to define a pathway between the first and second rail road cars.

30. (previously presented) The bridge plate kit of claim 24 wherein said disengageable one of said pivot pins is disengageable from its respective rail road car.

31. (previously presented) The bridge plate of claim 24 wherein said disengageable one of said pivot pins is removable disengageable from its respective fitting of said bridge plate.

32. (previously presented) The bridge plate of claim 24 wherein said second pivot pin is said disengageable pivot pin.

33. (currently amended) A bridge plate ~~for a vehicle carrying rail road car~~, for use in permitting a vehicle to be conducted between respective vehicle decks of a pair of adjacently coupled first and second rail road cars, said bridge plate comprising:

a beam member for extending between the two adjacently coupled railroad cars, the beam member having a first end for engaging the first rail road car, and a second end for engaging the second rail road car;

said beam member having an upper flange, a lower flange, and webs extending between said upper and lower flanges to form a hollow section;

said upper flange of said beam member having a track surface upon which the ~~wheeled~~ vehicle can be conducted;

said first end of said beam member having a pivot fitting mounted thereto;

said pivot fitting permitting movement of said beam about a pivot axis normal to said track surface.

34. (previously presented) The bridge plate of claim 33 wherein said bridge plate has three of said webs.

35. (previously presented) The bridge plate of claim 33 wherein said bridge plate has a length measured from the first end to the second end and has a lengthwise slot defined in said second end.

36. (previously presented) The bridge plate of claim 35 wherein at least one of said webs lies to either side of said slot.

37. (previously presented) The bridge plate of claim 35 wherein said slot is defined clear through both said upper and lower flanges.

38. (previously presented) The bridge plate of claim 35 wherein said second end of said bridge plate is bifurcated to define a pair of toes, said slot being defined between said toes.

39. (previously presented) The bridge plate of claim 34 wherein said first end is chamfered.

40. (previously presented) The bridge plate of claim 33 wherein said bridge plate has at least four of said webs extending parallel to each other, and running lengthwise said first and second ends.

41. (previously presented) The bridge plate of claim 33 wherein said bridge plate is made of aluminium.

42. (previously presented) The bridge plate of claim 33 wherein said surface of said upper flange has tread bars affixed thereto.

43. (previously presented) The bridge plate of claim 33 wherein said lower flange has a plastic bearing pad mounted thereto.

44. (previously presented) The bridge plate of claim 33 further comprising a hand grab mounted to said second end thereof to facilitate pivotal manipulation of said beam member relative to said axis.

45. (previously presented) The bridge plate of claim 33 wherein one of said pivot pins is removable.

46. (previously presented) The bridge plate of claim 33 wherein said second pivot pin is removable to facilitate disengagement of said bridge plate from the second rail road car.